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AUTHOR Greer, Rachel Dean; Finley, Evelyn Anne
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ABSTRACT

The state departments of education in 13 southern states were contacted for data pertaining to the number of men and women administrators employed during the 1984-85 academic year. The states contacted were: Arkansas; Alabama; Mississippi; Florida; Tennessee; Texas; Louisiana; Georgia; Kentucky; Virginia; South Carolina; Oklahoma; and West Virginia. Administrative categories included superintendent, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, supervisor, principal, and assistant principal. In each of the 9 states responding, there was a higher percentage of men in administrative positions. Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, and Kentucky did not respond. Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Mississippi had the lowest percentages of female administrators, with 13, 15, and 16 percent respectively. Florida had the highest percentage of women administrators with 31 percent, followed by 28 percent female administrators in Louisiana. It is concluded that, in spite of competence and good leadership skills, women are still not appropriately represented in public school administrative positions.
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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

by

Rachel Dean Greer
Professor

Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Department
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

and

Evelyn Anne Finley
Assistant Professor

Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Department
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Association of Teacher Educators Workshop
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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Congress in 1972 passed Title IX of the Educational Admendments which was designed to prohibit sex discrimination in educational institutions that received federal financial assistance. Since the passage of Title IX considerable gains have been made by women in education. For instance, in 1979 female college students outnumbered male college students and the enrollment of women in four year institutions rose from 43% in 1972 to 49% in 1979. Female enrollment in two year institutions increased from 44% to 54% for the same period. According to the following data women are receiving an increasing proportion of college degrees at every level. In 1979-80, 49% of the bachelor's degrees were earned by women. Many of these degrees were awarded to women entering customarily male fields such as agriculture, business, law, medical fields, engineering, and architecture. Between 1972 and 1980 women were awarded 50% of the master's degrees earned. Again, many of these degrees were in fields dominated by males. During this same period, between 1979 and 1980 the number of doctorates awarded women increased by 83% while during these years the number of doctorates awarded men declined. The greatest number of women awarded doctorate degrees during this period received their degrees in traditional areas such as education and the social sciences. According to Frasher and Frasher (1979) there is also evidence that women are gaining entrance into administrator programs at an increasing pace if not yet in numbers equivalent to men.

Historically, teaching has been one of the most popular choices of women and the largest professional category occupied by women. However,

despite the gains in the number of degrees awarded to women at all educational levels the gain for women in public school administration has been very minimum. In 1975 Estler reported that our public education systems are dominated in numbers by women, particularly as teachers. Yet, women are virtually excluded from the higher levels of educational leadership at local, state, and federal levels. According to Fidell (1970) as pressures to hire members of racial minority groups increases and federal funds are cut back, there may be a further decline in the proportion of women in academic fields.

Heath (1981) stated that women's educational equality does not just happen. Administrators make it happen. When federal support is involved, most have complied with the law to the extent of stating formally that they do not discriminate on the basis of sex. In general, however, hallmarks of their non discriminatory practices are ambivalence and footdragging.

According to Prather (1982) a frequent argument given by administrators for not hiring women for responsible and powerful positions is that women are inherently incapable of managing such positions and, hence, these positions should be reserved for men. As long as the employer believes that women do not have or cannot acquire the attributes he seeks, the employer feels justified in limiting his job applications to men.

Frasher and Frasher (1979) stated that the data to dispel the belief that women are incapable of effective performance have existed for many years. In studies comparing male and female administrative behavior from 1959 to 1979, in nearly every comparison of actual administrative performance,

whether on the basis of administrators' own responses, superiors' ratings, or subordinates' ratings, there have been either no sex differences or women have received higher ratings. Clearly, the women who have served as public school administrators have provided ample proof of their effectiveness. The credibility of women as administrators should have been established long ago but the data supporting the value of women as administrators have been ignored, submerged, and, incredibly, treated with skepticism.

The majority of school administrators today are employed in a hierarchy of positions leading to the district superintendency. These positions are: assistant principal, elementary and secondary principal, and assorted district level positions such as assistant and associate superintendent.

The pattern and message are clear. Though women are the majority of employees in education they are the minority of administrators at all levels and their numbers decrease with each step up the hierarchical ladder to near non representation at the top. This statistic was proven in a study conducted by the authors of the number of female and male administrators in the public schools of selected southern states.

PROCEDURE

The state departments of education of thirteen southern states were contacted for data pertaining to the number of men and women administrators employed in their respective states during the 1984-85 academic year. The states contacted were Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Kentucky, Virginia, South Carolina, Oklahoma and West Virginia.

RESULTS

Nine of the thirteen states (69) responded to the request for data. The administrative categories listed varied with each state but included superintendent, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, supervisor, principal and assistant principal.

As shown in Table 1 there was a greater percentage of male administrators than female administrators in each state. Oklahoma had the lowest percentage (13%) of female administrators followed by Arkansas (15%). Florida had the highest percentage of female administrators (31%) followed by Louisiana (28%).

TABLE 1

State	Number of Administrators	Male	Female	Percentage	
				Male	Female
Arkansas	1,506	1,280	226	85	15
Florida	3,903	2,677	1,226	69	31
Louisiana	2,969	2,121	848	72	28
Mississippi	1,201	1,004	197	84	16
Oklahoma	2,713	2,358	355	87	13
South Carolina	1,898	1,341	457	76	24
Texas	13,131	9,848	3,283	75	25
Virginia	3,143	2,394	749	77	23
West Virginia	1,810	1,419	391	79	21

CONCLUSIONS

Traditional social stereotypes of females as nurturers and supporters have limited their vocational opportunities. In addition, the availability of models is a major factor in women's career choices. Even today, the most visible and frequently the most significant adult models available to girls, other than their

parents, are their teachers. Since most public school teachers are female girls use them as their role models.

Within the past decade society in general, the education community, and the field of educational administration specifically have examined the roles ascribed to women. There has been agreement that sex discrimination has occurred and needs to be redressed. But, once again even though research evidence has shown that women are competent administrators and provide good leadership, public school administrative positions are still very much dominated by men.